



UN NEWS CENTRE

With breaking stories and
newswire products from



UNESCO aims to boost literacy and empower Nepal's marginalized



Children learning to read in a classroom in Nepal

30 March 2010 – A new United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (**UNESCO**) scheme seeks to enhance literacy and empower marginalized people in rural areas of Nepal, where less than half of the population can read.

The project will directly benefit 1,000 illiterate girls and women, as well as members of other disadvantaged groups, in classrooms.

But its main thrust is to developing training methods for the Dhanusa and Kapilbastu districts, in Nepal's south-east and south, respectively, where adult literacy rates reach just 48 per cent, far below the national average of 84 per cent.

Through "innovative, mother tongue-based" methods, the project, funded by Japan, will "better deliver basic literacy and post-literacy programmes in rural communities," said Axel Plathe, UNESCO's Representative to Nepal.

Nepal faces large disparities in literacy rates between urban and rural areas, as well as between rich and poor zones.

Rates for those with higher incomes average 72 per cent, while among the poorest, only 23 per cent are literate. It has been reported that among some disadvantaged cases in rural areas, rates are as low as 4 to 10 per cent.

Urban areas have recorded a literacy rate of 73 per cent, but only reaching 43 per cent on average in rural areas.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

UN officials urge redoubled efforts to end female genital mutilation